



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

DEPARTMENT OF NURSING EDUCATION

IN CHARGE OF

ISABEL M. STEWART, R.N.

Collaborators: S. LILLIAN CLAYTON and ANNA C. JAMMÉ

THE VASSAR NURSING-PREPARATORY COURSE: A NEW EXPERIMENT IN NURSING EDUCATION

If we had been told, two or three years ago, that we should see, in 1918, a group of over four hundred college graduates established in the academic halls of one of our most noted colleges for women, preparing themselves to enter the profession of nursing, we should have thought it too wonderful to be true, but here they are on the beautiful Vassar campus, four hundred and thirty in all, gathered together at the call of their country from the four corners of the American continent.

It is interesting to know something of the personnel of this new nursing bataillon. In the first place they are graduates of 115 colleges scattered over the length and breadth of the country. Vassar heads the list with 44, Smith comes next with 37, then Wellesley with 27, Holyoke with 20, and Oberlin with 18. After that come the state universities: University of Michigan and Texas each with 15, University of Wisconsin and Louisiana with 11 each, University of Minnesota, University of Cincinnati and Radcliffe with 8 each; the other 103 colleges average about two students each. These women hail from 41 states in the union with six from the neighboring country of Canada. Ohio stands first, having contributed 53 or about twelve per cent of the whole group. Next comes New York, 44; then Massachusetts, 35; Illinois, 28; Michigan, 27; Minnesota, 19; Pennsylvania, 17; Indiana and Iowa each 16; New Jersey, 14; Wisconsin and Colorado each 12; the others ranging from this to one. Taken in sections, the middle west comes in strongest, contributing about half of the total, the eastern states come next, and the far west contributes about ten per cent of the whole. The southern states are pretty well represented with about thirteen per cent.

When the call to the colleges went out, the alumnae from the last ten years' classes were the ones who were asked for. Of the whole group, about one-half are graduates of 1915 or later, the largest group, 99 (23 per cent), being of the 1918 class. Only about 19 come from classes earlier than 1910. The ages range from 19 to 40 years, the mean age being between 24 and 25.

We have been anxious to know from what professions or occupations these young women are drawn. So many college women go

into the teaching professions that we are not surprised to see this occupation heading the list, but it is somewhat astounding to note that over half of the whole group are teachers, two of these being school principals. The next largest group, 106, represents students who have come direct from college. The secretaries, stenographers and business women come next, with 22, the social workers next, with about 17, and then comes a widely varied assortment including 5 newspaper writers and reporters, 2 librarians, a farmer, a ranch housekeeper, a missionary, a superintendent of music, a dramatic worker, 2 workers on advertising and many others. 35 give no previous occupation and it is assumed that they have lived at home or at least have not been engaged as wage earners.

No figures can be given as to the average earning capacity of this group, but it is known that many of them left excellent positions to enter this branch of war service. One former teacher wears a service pin with five stars representing five brothers in the army and navy. Some are young wives whose husbands are in France. Most have come into nursing for the same reasons that college men have gone into the army, as a temporary service for the duration of the war, after which a good proportion expected to return to their former occupations. Already, however, they are beginning to see some of the possibilities in the nursing field apart from the care of sick soldiers and sailors. Most of us who have felt the strong pull of nursing ourselves, and who see the great need for workers in all the many branches of the profession, are confident that when once they get into the thick of the work, it will hold them—they will not want to give it up.

They are a splendid body of women. The members of the faculty who are working with them as well as the superintendents of nurses, physicians and college professors who have visited the classes and seen the students at work, all agree that they are an unusually keen, earnest, hard-working and attractive group of young women. They compare very favorably with professional students in any field, and most of them would be considered a decided asset in any profession. On the day of convocation, Dean Mills said he believed they were the largest group of women graduates of colleges ever gathered together for the purpose of preparing for one special field of professional work and the largest body of college women ever assembled in one place for patriotic service.

One cannot fail to be impressed with their fine spirit. It shows itself in the way they have buckled down to work; in their ready acceptance of the strenuous programme and somewhat restricted personal liberties which have been considered necessary for the

accomplishment of the work; in the cheerful way they rise for setting-up exercises at 5.55 a. m. and the zeal they show in making envelope corners, and wielding the damp dusters. The best thing about it is, that the fine spirit and the good work keep up, and that the girls are, if anything, more happy and enthusiastic at the end of their first six weeks than in the beginning. They realize that the real testing time will come later when they get into the hospitals, and they are very anxious to "make good" there. No doubt there will be some in this group, as in all groups of probationers, who will fall down in the practical work, some who will prove quitters or slackers, and some who will never be able to adapt themselves well to the exacting demands of the hospital. There will probably be foolish ones, and sentimental ones and neurotic ones, but on the whole, most of them give the impression of being the kind of people we like to see coming into nursing—wholesome, intelligent, eager, energetic and full of the spirit of service.

The arrangements for the later training in the hospitals, have worked out on the whole satisfactorily. Since this is more or less of an experiment, it was considered wise to concentrate the students in fair-sized groups in a few hospitals rather than to distribute them in twos and threes over a great many. The schools included on the list which was sent to the students, represented all sections of the country and several types of hospitals. It did not include all the prominent schools in the country by any means, since many could not reduce their three-year course to two years on account of state laws, and others preferred not to make any changes in their system. No general canvas of schools was made because of the desire to try the experiment first with a small group, but whenever a hospital asked to be included and gave assurance of having the proper facilities for training, it was added, unless, as in some cases, the application came too late. Students had absolute freedom of choice in the selection of their schools, except for the fact that the better known schools were quickly filled, and then a second or sometimes a third and fourth choice had to be made. Wherever any student expressed a preference for a hospital not on the list, she was at perfect liberty to enter that school so long as it proved to be of good general standing.

The results show a decided preference for eastern hospitals and particularly for those in New York. The largest groups will go to the big municipal hospitals such as Bellevue and the City Hospital, New York, the Philadelphia General, the Boston City, the Cincinnati General and other well known city institutions. Bellevue takes the largest single group of 60 students, but two or three others have classes of 40, and several have classes of 20 or more. Almost all the

students had arranged for their hospital training before coming to the camp. This was before the Army School was established, so practically all are entering civil hospitals.

The status of these students as they enter the training schools will be the status of probationers to the beginning of their fourth month of training, except that these students will have concentrated more on the theoretical side of their preparatory work and will not have had the practical nursing experience in the wards which most probationers get almost from the beginning. It is assumed that the whole preparatory course in most good schools would be at least four months. With these students, three months of this time will be spent at Vassar and about one month in the hospital. All the usual preparatory subjects will have been covered when the students reach the hospital, including courses in Anatomy and Physiology (60 hours), Bacteriology (48 hours), Chemistry (48 hours), Hygiene and Sanitation (30 hours), Elementary Materia Medica (24 hours), Nutrition and Cooking (60 hours), Elementary Nursing and Hospital Economy (60 hours), and the History of Nursing (10 hours). In addition, all students who have not had Psychology and Social Economy before have courses of 30 hours each in these subjects.

It is expected that the students will go right on the wards and will spend the remaining part of the preparatory period in intensive ward practice, where they will learn to apply the principles which they have acquired, and where they can be tested as are other probationers, as to their fitness for nursing work. They will have to have some practical nursing demonstrations to introduce them to the special methods and regulations of the hospitals to which they go, because no preparatory course outside of the hospital could cover these points. But the general principles and methods of elementary nursing will have been covered, and it is not expected that more than ten or twelve hours of additional instruction will be necessary. They will need careful supervision on the wards, as all beginners do, but it is hoped that they will have some slight advantage because of their three months thorough grounding in the principles, and the fact that they will have few classes and studies at first and will be free to give most of their time and thought to the practical side of the work. We shall want to see just how this plan works out because it would determine somewhat our policies in future courses of a similar type.

It is expected that this group (those who are accepted) will join the class which completed its preparatory course in the spring term, and will proceed at once with the remaining work of the first year. This is necessary in order that they may be able to complete the whole training in the two years. No definite plan can be laid down for the

rest of the course, but it would seem to be best to combine the lectures and classes of the intermediate and senior years in the second year, for all the two-year people. In this way, no extra classes would have to be given and since most schools are trying to push the third year work forward, anyway, in order to release their senior pupils if they should be needed for military service, there would not need to be very much difference in class schedules for the two-year and the three-year pupils.

There is no room in this brief sketch to tell of the splendid organization of the work at the Vassar training camp, the way in which they have been able to adapt their buildings to provide for diet kitchens and nursing laboratories and the many other new needs of this large body of students, the interesting organization of the students themselves into squads and companies under their own selected officers, the social and athletic activities of the camp, the musical programmes and the series of lectures from authorities in nursing, social, medical and public health work, the weekly paper, *The Thermometer*, published by the students themselves in coöperation with the student farmers, and many other details. The main point is that so far as it has gone, the experiment seems to have been eminently successful. The teachers have been just as enthusiastic over it as the students, and everybody seems to agree that it is a thoroughly practical scheme, which might be fitted into the regular programme of college work in many colleges, or might be given in the summer term in colleges like Vassar which do not include vocational courses in their curriculum.

A great deal of interest has been aroused by the experiment throughout the whole country, and many inquiries have been coming in from universities, normal schools and state colleges regarding the organization of similar courses in those institutions. A pamphlet is being prepared which will give the results of our experience here and in other colleges and which will lay down the fundamental principles which seem to be necessary in working out the different types of affiliation with nursing schools. If it can be proven that nursing students who receive the preliminary preparation outside the hospital do as well as those who enter the hospital direct, it is certain that most hospitals would prefer to turn over that part of their educational work to other agencies. This will relieve the hospital of the most expensive and difficult part of its teaching and will make it possible to concentrate more on the part of the training which deals with the whole question of disease and its treatment.